

Cardinals are like Brother J

A couple of years ago, a friend presented me a lovely bonsai tree she had picked up at the Asian festival.

Now, I am known for my dry wine, dry wit and dry plants. OK ... so only the last one is true. But, that being so, I felt obliged to point out that living creatures of the green leafy variety do not do very well under my stewardship. Critters don't fare much better, I'm afraid. I actually managed to kill off a thriving colony of nearly indestructible sea monkeys.

Still, it was a very nice bonsai — reasonably green and accompanied by some fertilizer pellets. I promised to try hard to keep it alive. I opened my heart and home to it.

For almost two years, I watered, spritzed and fertilized Brother Juniper. (I felt that naming him would give me more of a sense of being a true caregiver.)

But Brother Juniper started getting brown. I moved him around to different venues around the apartment.

Occasionally, my friend would inquire, "So, how's that lovely bonsai doing that you promised to nurture with all your heart and soul? ... Y'know, hairball, that booger cost me \$20 so you better not kill it like you did those sea monkeys!"

A low blow, even if I am a hairball.

I renewed my efforts. Deep soaking. Spritzing a half dozen times a day. Pleasant conversation.

Brother J just stayed brown. I finally called up a nursery that is acclaimed by the local bonsai club. They advised me to bring the patient in for a checkup.

Verdict: Dead. Defunct. Expired. No longer a viable living thing.

"In fact," the bonsai guy said, "this plant has been dead for quite a long time."

"But, but, but, but, but ..." I said hopefully, "I've been seeing little hints of green



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here and there and the branches no longer just snap off when you brush them with your finger."

"He's dead. You killed him, Jim!" (I always wanted to use that line.)

And this, I submit, is how things stand with our once-beloved Cardinals football team. Fact is, unlike Brother Juniper, the team was dead-on-arrival.

But every year we look at them with hope and think: Perhaps they can be revived ... maybe this is the year the invigorating sap of life rejuvenates them from their sleeping torpor and they stir our hearts with a true contending season. And by that, I do not mean an 8-8 season that we trick ourselves into thinking means progress.

The team cannot be revived, though. It will continue taunting us with a bit of greenery here, a promising twig there. But it is dead nonetheless. Expired. Its bird soul has flown.

Is it any wonder no one in the East Valley, much less the West, can muster the enthusiasm to plant a stadium for them?

We all know deep in our hearts that the team is defunct. Maybe they can be repotted somewhere else. All we need now is to find a new sap.

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